

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

160 Court Street, Buffalo, New York 14202

TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING by S. Casarotto

9/13/09

THE BEAUTIFUL LADY

The statue of the *Madonna dei Miracoli* (Our Lady of Miracles) at St. Anthony's was crafted in 1943 by Luigi Avoglio of Buffalo after the original in St. Dominic Church in Mussomeli, Italy. The statue has been restored by the Swiateck Studios of Buffalo.

The presentation of Mary in regal and bridal attire was frequent in imperial Rome. In the first grand Marian architectural project realized in the West, the mosaic decoration of the "arch of triumph" in the Roman Church of St. Mary Major (a 4th century Basilica enlarged by Pope Sixtus II between 432 and 440), we find the Virgin in cloth of gold, in brocades and embroidered garments: an immediate iconographic response to the solemn declaration of the Council of Ephesus a year earlier, in 431, which recognized Mary as the "*Mother of God.*" The collective nature of her royal condition is underlined by the dedicatory inscription on the mosaic clad arch, "*Xistus episcopus plebi Dei*" (Bishop Xistus [had this made] for the people of God): a phrase that suggests how such images were understood, with Mary conceived not primarily as an individual but as a collective figure of God's people, the "*Domina Ecclesia*" or "Lady Church".

In the Apocalypse, the beautiful Lady, adorned with jewels and a crown of 12 stars, is the symbol of the redeemed mankind and the triumphant Church, ready to join the Groom in eternal glory. Many church writers and particularly Vatican II spoke of Mary as figure of the Church.

Portraying Mary as she protects her children under her mantle has been a characteristic of the Siennese school.

THE LANGUAGE OF GOD

If you happen to be in a church where the mass is being celebrated in Italian or Latin or Spanish or Polish and you say: "I don't understand Italian or Latin or Spanish or Polish" and are tempted to leave the church, you should think of those who attend Mass in English and do not understand this language! Then, you may also think of these wise words by St. Augustine who often had Greeks and Ostrogoths in his audience: "*If there are some present who do not understand what is being said or sung, they know at least that all is said and sung to the glory of God, and that is sufficient for them to join in it with devotion.*" St. Augustine had a working knowledge of the Greek language in order to be of service to his people and he also sent from Africa a bishop to assist Ostrogoth migrant workers in Constantinople. That's 4th century "cultural diversity."